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## MILTON'S VIEW OF EDUCATION IN *PARADISE LOST*

The student of Milton may welcome the suggestion that in *Paradise Lost* the poet is interested in the problems of education. If we are already accustomed to regard the epic as in part an artistic embodiment of a constructive theology, fulfilling the promise of justifying the ways of God to men, we may also comprehend under that announced purpose an interest in the most universal problems of education. If we think of Milton as so completely the master of the epic conventions that they become his instruments in the expression of a highly philosophic aim, we might also believe him capable of presenting through these conventions the idea of a sound education. And we might be the more willing to discover such an idea in the poem if we were to find that in Milton's thought the topic of education was essentially connected with those other dominant philosophical themes of the epic, theology and ethics.

This naturally leads to an examination of the prose for a record of the poet's thought in the years preceding the great epic. We have long assumed in our study that the prose is capable of throwing light upon the theology of the fourth book; and we have also recognized an obvious connection between the importance of liberty in the prose, and an equally apparent insistence throughout the epic upon the the same theme. If we found that in the prose the problems of education were naturally related to this basic topic of liberty, we might be willing to assume a similar tendency when the epic was composed.

We may recall that as early as 1644 in the letter *Of Education* to Master Hartlib education has for its most comprehensive aim "to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright."<sup>1</sup> The ideas advanced in this early work, we may add, he regards as the "burnishing of many studious and contemplative years, altogether spent in the search of religious and civil knowledge."<sup>2</sup> According to this his early thought is the outcome primarily of his theological and political thought. And, again, in the *Second Defence of the English People* the principles of education are for Milton so vital that

<sup>1</sup> *Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. by J. A. St. John, 5 vol., London, 1901-1909, 3. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

there can be nothing more necessary "to principle the minds of men in virtue, the only genuine source of political and individual liberty, the only true safeguard of states, the bulwark of their prosperity and renown."<sup>3</sup> The establishment thus early in Milton's thought of so close a relation between education, ethics, and politics leads us to wonder whether in the work of his mature genius concerned with religious and ethical aspects of liberty he could have passed over in silence a subject of such vital importance as education seemed to be. If we seek in the epic for a conscious facing of the problems of education, we are seeking in a great poem the central theme of which is liberty for a description of the process by which that ideal human state is to be achieved.

We would reasonably expect that such a view artistically embodied in the epic would represent an advance over the earlier view. We might expect it to be more philosophic—in the sense that *Paradise Lost* is more philosophic than any earlier work of the poet. It would possess the universality of the highest poetry. And, again, remembering how scanty the letter to Hartlib is in hints relating to method, and the proper temper of the teacher, and the right attitude of the scholar, we might expect any conception in the epic to round out in certain important respects the view of 1644.

So much by way of anticipation. At this point, however, it will suffice to keep in mind two outstanding facts concerning the early work. The first is that as early as 1644 Milton had a definitely utilitarian view of education. Whether we think of the purpose of education as the repairing of the ruins of our first parents, or, in the words of that other definition, as enabling "a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war,"<sup>4</sup> the practical character of the theory remains the same.

The second fact is that these two definitions just quoted are essentially different; and no attempt is made to establish a relation between them. The reforms in education suggested are seemingly made in the light of one or of the other of these definitions, but hardly in the light of both. They represent quite different aims. The one proposes "to repair the ruins of

<sup>3</sup>*Prose Works*, 1. 259.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* 3. 467.

our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection." Such a view contemplates the pupil as by nature sinful and therefore subject to discipline, a process of eradicating evil, if need be with pain. It is the view which one might expect from a Puritan.

The other definition is not necessarily Puritanical at all. It states simply that it is the business of education to fit the individual to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. According to this view it is the object of education to make good citizens. The expressed aim has no reference to the inherent sinfulness of man's nature. It seeks, rather, to emphasize that other equally important fact, the potential goodness of man's nature. Here in the early treatise we have two definitions of the purpose of education based upon two different conceptions of the nature of man.<sup>48</sup> Had Milton been more interested in this early work in a philosophical theory of education, a conflict between the two views might have become apparent. That this conflict was avoided was probably due to the fact that he was mainly interested as an educational reformer in offering certain specific suggestions. The purpose of the letter, not being highly philosophical, does not necessitate the development of the implications of the two definitions.

With *Paradise Lost* it is different. Here, far from being interested in the specific questions which were his concern in 1644, he turned naturally to those more universal questions of human conduct involved in his presentation of our progenitor, Adam. The protagonist is representative of humanity in its most universal capacities, tendencies, and problems. It would not be unreasonable to think of him also as a kind of universal pupil. If he were to be regarded in this light, then the two views of education implicit in the early work would become highly important.

Perhaps, then, we shall be justified in regarding the discourse of Raphael as the artistic embodiment of an ideal of education

<sup>48</sup> See Lane Cooper, *Two Views of Education*, in *The Sewanee Review*, July, 1918.

which contemplates man as essentially good; and, in turn, the discourse of Michael at the end of the epic as an equally purposive presentation of a kind of education which assumes the sinfulness of man's nature. The one, Raphael, we may call Milton's ideal schoolmaster aiming to make a potentially perfect Adam fit "to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices . . . of peace and war,"—of peace, let us add, in the worship of God, and of war, in the withstanding of Satan. Michael is another ideal schoolmaster, dealing with man after the fall, after man had sinned and come short of the glory of God. This fact the teacher keeps ever uppermost in mind; he seeks, in consequence, not the development of Godlike capacities, but the repair of the ruin already wrought by his pupil.

Thus the two discourses, if they could be supposed to bear upon a theory of education, would seem to stand in a complementary relation. If we say that for Milton the aim of man is to be in right relation with his Maker, then we can say that Raphael aims to help man to achieve this end by assuming his essential goodness, and Michael by assuming his essential sinfulness. That there are these two basic—and complementary—notions of the end of education, dependent, in turn, upon two conceptions of the nature of man, will perhaps become apparent as we examine in some detail the utterances of these two angelic teachers.

We may the better see in these two discourses the purpose of Milton to present the methods of two good teachers if we try at the beginning to determine their possible relation to the basic Miltonic theme of liberty. In the famous autobiographical passage of the *Second Defence* the poet describes the greater part of his work up to 1654, including specifically the letter to Hartlib, as an endeavor to promote "real and substantial liberty, which is rather to be sought from within than from without; and whose existence depends, not so much on the terror of the sword, as on sobriety of conduct and integrity of life."<sup>5</sup> Here he regards his early utterance on education, along with the tracts on divorce and the more famous work on the freedom of the press, as documents concerned with the subject of liberty. With that other passage in mind, that there

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 1. 258.

can be nothing more necessary than education "to principle the minds of men in virtue, the only genuine source of political and individual liberty,"<sup>6</sup> we would be speaking in the spirit of Milton if we said that Raphael's function as a teacher was to educate Adam to preserve his liberty, and that Michael's purpose was to help him to regain it.

## II

In the light of this connection in the poet's mind between liberty and education, the commission to Raphael in the fifth book of the epic when he is sent to instruct Adam may prove significant:

such discourse bring on  
As may advise him of his happy state—  
Happiness in his power left free to will,  
Left to his own free will, his will though free,  
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware  
He swerve not, too secure.<sup>7</sup>

Raphael is sent for the express purpose of teaching Adam to preserve his happiness, i.e., to preserve his freedom by learning to recognize the dangers involved in that freedom. It is, of course, the fundamental paradox of Milton's thought, with the solution of which we are not here concerned. What does immediately concern us is that this commission is but a re-phrasing of that comprehensive aim which the poet had set for himself in all of his published work,—of which the letter on education is a part,—“the promotion of real and substantial liberty, which is rather to be sought from within than from without.” The aim set for Raphael, the angelic teacher, is not far from the aim which Milton has set for himself.

A second fact is noteworthy: that this commission involves the idea of “discourse,” a term which for the poet sometimes denotes particularly the functioning of the rational faculty. That the teacher interprets his task as specifically one of stimulating the reason becomes apparent at the very beginning of his conversation with Adam. Not only does he deal with subject matter quite abstract, the ability of spiritual beings to assimilate substance, and, again, the essential unity of all sub-

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.* 1. 259.

<sup>7</sup> *Paradise Lost*, ed. by A. W. Verity, Cambridge, 1910, 5. 233-238.

stance; but he gives a significant turn to this explanation, insisting that in this underlying unity there is a progress from body to spirit, from vegetable life to animal, finally to intellectual,

whence the soul  
Reason receives, and reason is her being,  
Discursive, or intuitive: discourse  
Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,  
Differing but in degree, in kind the same.<sup>8</sup>

If the teacher did not have a very definite purpose in such an utterance, he is to be accused of bad art in talking quite over the head of his pupil. It is hardly by chance that Raphael insists at the outset upon the distinction in the two means of attaining truth, the intuitive insight of the heavenly teacher, and human attainment through an act of the reason. The instructor knows well the object which he has in mind when he thus begins by laying down three axiomatic principles: that the knowledge of the teacher is of a higher sort than that of the pupil; that the pupil has, however, a distinctly human capacity by which he may approximate the knowledge of an angel; and that his power of reason or "discourse" differs only in degree from that higher gift of intuition or immediate insight.

It is also significant that the ideal schoolmaster is made at the outset to enunciate an educational principle much emphasized in Milton's day:

High matter thou enjoin'st me, O prime of men,  
Sad task and hard; for how shall I relate  
To human sense the invisible exploits  
Of warring Spirits? . . . . .  
. . . . . yet for thy good  
. . . . . I shall delineate so,  
By likening spiritual to corporal forms,  
As may express them best.<sup>9</sup>

Let us compare this with a passage from the early treatise:

But because our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *P. L.* 5. 486-490.

<sup>9</sup> *P. L.* 5. 563 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.* 3. 464.

This insistence upon the basic character of knowledge gained through the senses was a commonplace of the pedagogical theory of the day. It is even more evident in such a theorist as Comenius.<sup>11</sup> The interesting point for us is that such a commonplace of contemporary theory should be found just at the beginning of the discourse of Raphael as a kind of theoretical foundation for the instruction. It seems hard to believe that Milton is not thinking in terms of educational policy.

That Milton intended these ideas to be basic is evident from the way in which Adam, indeed a most promising pupil, is represented as assimilating his first lesson:

Well hast thou taught the way that might direct  
Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set  
From centre to circumference, whereon  
In contemplation of created things,  
By steps we may ascend to God.<sup>12</sup>

It is an expression of the aim of education not far from the ideal of the modern scientist proposing to instruct the intellect in the laws of nature that man may learn to shape his actions in accordance with those laws,—or, in the theological phraseology of Milton, that he may by steps ascend to God.

We must agree, however, that Raphael does not lead his pupil to the observation of the same phenomena which our modern scientist regards as the matter of a good education. We should hardly expect to find in the ideal modern curriculum the three great subjects of discourse which constitute the substance of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth books of the epic. The first has to do with the fall of the disobedient angels, the second with the Creation, and the third with "celestial motions." But we may add that for our progenitor as conceived by Milton these topics may well stand in the place of certain modern studies.

Let us observe certain features which these subjects of discourse possess in common. First, each is prompted by the curiosity of the pupil. The teacher conceives of his function, in turn, as the imparting of information always in the light of a definite moral or intellectual good for the pupil. Thus the angel, possessing the knowledge intuitively, imparts it in each instance in a way which exercises the rational powers of man.

<sup>11</sup> See Adamson, *Pioneers of Modern Education*, Cambridge, 1905, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *P. L.* 5. 508-512.



We may also observe that these three topics constitute three essentially different kinds of subject matter. We may say that the fall of the angels, a record of superhuman acts, is a narrative which upon Adam has all of the effects of tragedy. The account of the Creation has, in turn, much the relation to the thought of our first ancestor that the account of the historical geologist has to ours. The third matter of discourse, celestial motions or astronomy, brings up, we shall see, the problem of the curbing of the wrongly motivated scientific impulse. While it may be unsafe to assume that Milton thus purposely chose his fields to illustrate an admirable diversity of subject matter, it is interesting to reflect that the poet bent only upon justifying the ways of God to men,—interested only in a theological problem with little necessary relation to pedagogy,—need not have stressed certain aspects of the Creation, and need not have discussed celestial motions at all. That the pupil is represented as seeking information in three fields without necessary continuity so far as epic structure is concerned may seem to result from the conscious art of the poet in illustrating certain principles of a sound education.

The first discourse, we have suggested, has for its aim the moral effect of tragedy—an effect such as that intended for the readers of *Samson Agonistes*. We may add that much of the preface to Milton's tragedy seems to have a pertinent application to the tragedy which Raphael relates to Adam. Indeed, if it were our purpose to discuss the artistry of this portion of the narrative, it would not be uninteresting to observe how its speeches assume much the character of dramatic dialogue, and the function of chorus is admirably assumed by Raphael himself. Thus, in lieu of those "choice histories, heroic poems, and Attic tragedies of stateliest . . . argument,"<sup>13</sup> referred to in the early letter as the proper reading for the pupil, we have here as the proper imaginative material for this first pupil a narrative in obvious relation to his own approaching temptation. And Raphael, a kind of chorus, points out the pertinency of the action to the life of the listener as faithfully as the chorus of a classical tragedy establishes relations between the action and the universal problems of life involved for the normal spectator or reader.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.* 3. 473.

The reader may have noticed that the appeal of *Samson Agonistes* is not solely to the emotions of pity and fear, but as well to the rational powers by which the reader recognizes the universal scope of the moral problems involved. In like manner, in the story of the fall, Milton, causing Raphael to point out the moral significance for Adam of the action, at least gives us an admirable illustration of the rôle of the dramatic artist as teacher. Raphael becomes at times almost the accompaniment of the action, pointing to that central theme of the epic, obedience, and through that obedience, freedom. In the first part of the heavenly instruction the teacher may be said to be employing the highest conscious art.

The second portion of the discourse, the account of the Creation, is equally interesting to the student of Milton's theory of education. Again Adam is represented as seeking information in no wrong spirit, but

Led on, yet sinless, with desire to know  
What nearer might concern him, how this World  
Of Heaven and Earth conspicuous first began;  
When, and whereof, created; for what cause;  
What within Eden, or without, was done  
Before his memory.<sup>14</sup>

This is for Milton the healthy attitude in which the desire for knowledge is subordinated to the aim of life, the bringing of the will of the individual into conformity with the Divine Will. In this spirit, and with the thought uppermost that the account of the fall had been for his moral good, the pupil seeks further information:

But, since thou hast vouchsafed  
Gently, for our instruction, to impart  
Things above earthly thought, which yet concerned  
Our knowing, as to highest Wisdom seemed,  
Deign to descend now lower, and relate  
What may no less perhaps avail us known:

. . . . .  
. . . . .  
if unforbid thou may'st unfold  
What we not to explore the secrets ask  
Of his eternal empire, but the more  
To magnify his works the more we know.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> P. L. 7. 61-66.

<sup>15</sup> P. L. 7. 80-97.

So long as Adam preserves this attitude, Raphael is quite willing to continue the instruction:

Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve  
To glorify the Maker, and infer  
Thee also happier, shall not be withheld  
Thy hearing; such commission from above  
I have received, to answer thy desire  
Of knowledge within bounds; beyond abstain  
To ask . . . .

Then he adds:

But knowledge is as food, and needs no less  
Her temperance over appetite, to know  
In measure what the mind may well contain.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, as the fitting introduction to the second narrative we have this insistence that the desire for knowledge shall be subordinated to the desire for right conduct, to the ethical ideal.

Throughout the account of the Creation the narrative is constantly subordinated to the moral purpose. This does not necessarily imply an inartistic didacticism. But there is continual emphasis upon the preëminent nature of God's final creation, Man, and his consequent duty as one made in the image of his Maker not to fall:

There wanted yet the master-work, the end  
Of all yet done; a creature who, not prone  
And brute as other creatures, but endued  
With sanctity of reason, might erect  
His stature, and upright with front serene  
Govern the rest, self-knowing . . . .<sup>17</sup>

It is to be noticed that Raphael insists that man is to be distinguished from the lower animals through his possession of that very power to which his heavenly instructor is constantly appealing. Reason, the teacher points out, is properly the ruling principle; but even in the satisfaction of reason a proper temperance must be observed if the individual is to keep his freedom. Curiosity must be subordinated to practical aims and purposes.

It was this vital principle of the intellectual life which was soon to be illustrated in a striking way. Adam, not in the

<sup>16</sup> *P. L.* 7. 115-128.

<sup>17</sup> *P. L.* 7. 505-510.

least wearied by a lesson already somewhat long, inquires concerning celestial motions. Now in the portion of the epic thus concerned with astronomical questions, Milton is hardly doubting the value of the study of astronomy; but he evidently is doubting the value of this study—and of any study—pursued with certain aims and motives. The poet had apparently approved of the motives which had first dominated Adam's search for knowledge: the firm conviction that by knowledge he might ascend to God. Listening in this spirit, he had received full benefit from the narratives of the fall and of the Creation. But here, in the eighth book, he is represented as having lost sight of that ideal:

When I behold this goodly frame, this World  
Of Heaven and Earth consisting, and compute  
Their magnitudes; this Earth, a spot, a grain,  
An atom, with the firmament compared  
And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll  
Spaces incomprehensible . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . . merely to officiate light  
Round this opacous Earth, this punctual spot,  
One day and night, in all their vast survey  
Useless besides; reasoning I oft admire  
How Nature, wise and frugal, could commit  
Such disproportions . . . .<sup>18</sup>

The state of mind of the pupil is here obviously intended to represent a desire for knowledge not properly subordinated to a high moral aim. Adam just here is a bad scientist. And the attitude of the teacher may well denote the proper handling of a vital problem in the direction of all study, the problem of imparting information when the motive in which it is sought is radically wrong. Milton, one likes to imagine, had faced just such a case; and Raphael's method is for him just the right approach.

The ideal teacher does not take to task the healthy curiosity as such:

To ask or search I blame thee not; for heaven  
Is as the Book of God before thee set,  
Wherein to read his wondrous works, . . . .<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *P. L.* 8. 15-27.

<sup>19</sup> *P. L.* 8. 66 ff.

With such a sentiment a scientist like Louis Agassiz is in complete sympathy. There follows, however, a passage which at first glance may seem to argue the fruitlessness of much scientific investigation. Yet we can hardly suppose that Milton, the admirer of Galileo, and the student of the best research of his day, would be thus hostile to the scientific spirit which seeks to reveal the hidden purposes of nature. We ought rather to remember that the reply of the angelic teacher contemplates not the individual but the type, Man, in a typical moral state. It is Milton's rebuke of the falsely critical spirit, and the assumptions underlying a criticism in such a spirit of the economy of nature. Adam has ceased for the moment to be interested in the understanding of the ways of God to men—we must ever keep in mind the announced purpose of the epic—and has substituted for this true motive a censure of those ways as inferior to those which he himself might have devised. The pupil has forgotten that his chief business in life, if he will preserve his freedom, his happy state, is to remain obedient. To do this he must learn to bring his desires, including his desire for knowledge, into subjection to this dominant purpose of life. If he seeks knowledge in a spirit of censure of God's ways, he is not seeking the truth which will make him free. Knowledge should make him free; and the knowledge which Raphael up to this time had imparted had the tendency to make him free in this Miltonic sense. But a satisfaction of the desire just at this point would have made him less free: it would have fostered a wrong state of mind, would have fostered this tendency to assume equality with the Maker, and hence would have contributed to Adam's fall. Much of this Milton may have had in mind in Raphael's interesting discourse on the limits of human knowledge. Milton the teacher may be giving artistic expression to no unimportant aspect of his mature theory of education.

It is also to be noticed that the teacher is alive to the false processes of reasoning upon which the censures of the pupil are based. Raphael is at special pains to prove, for instance, "that great or bright infers not excellence."<sup>20</sup> There is another equally dangerous logical fallacy: the notion that Man's failure to understand a function implies any lack of

<sup>20</sup> *P. L.* 8. 90-1.

function and hence a flaw in the Divine economy. It is a good thing in the face of such assumptions to remember the rebuke of Raphael:

And for the heaven's wide circuit, let it speak  
The Maker's high magnificence, who built  
So spacious, and his line stretched out so far,  
That Man may know he dwells not in his own.<sup>21</sup>

It is the poet's answer to arrogance and conceit, his call to humility, and insistence upon the highest practicality.

We shall, however, miss the point if we assume that the teacher refuses to satisfy the curiosity. What follows is substantially an account, in hypothetical form, of the Copernican theory:

What if the sun  
Be centre to the World, and other stars,  
By his attractive virtue and their own  
Incited, dance about him various rounds?<sup>22</sup>

In the light of the fact that the cosmography of the epic is Ptolemaic, it is interesting,—but perhaps not altogether profitable,—to speculate concerning this newer astronomy from the lips of the angelic teacher. It may be that Milton recognized that the later view, properly regarded, might have certain important moral consequences: that it might, for instance, be the means of correcting that egotism which caused Adam to assume that the earth was the centre of the universe.

The rebuke ends with an exhortation to keep in mind constantly the central aim of life: "Think only what concerns thee and thy being."<sup>23</sup> The effect upon the pupil is immediate. The mind is cleared of doubt and at the same time chastened.<sup>24</sup> As on a former occasion Adam admirably sums up the universal principle which the teacher had in mind:

That not to know at large of things remote  
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know

<sup>21</sup> *P. L.* 8. 100–103.

<sup>22</sup> *P. L.* 8. 122–125.

<sup>23</sup> *P. L.* 8. 174.

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that Adam put the blame not upon himself as an individual but upon what he assumes to be universal human tendencies:

But apt the mind or fancy is to rove  
Unchecked; and of her roving is no end,  
Till warned, or by experience taught, . . . (8. 188–190)

It is easy to blame our imaginations instead of our moral, responsible selves!

That which before us lies in daily life,  
 Is the prime wisdom: what is more is fume,  
 Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,  
 And renders us in things that most concern  
 Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek.<sup>25</sup>

He thereupon proposes to descend a lower flight, and speak of things at hand useful. The poet seemingly wishes the reader to believe that the methods of the teacher in dealing with a serious moral state—a state most dangerous in the light of the impending temptation—had been most successful.

### III

We enter now upon a new stage in the education of this universal type of pupil. The teacher ceases to impart information, and plays the new rôle of willing listener, as Adam relates the story of his past. Raphael could hardly have conceived of his function as an auditor as a partial fulfilment of his purpose as a teacher, had he not regarded it as a process of developing character through self-expression—and correcting, in turn, the flaws which became apparent. Here the heavenly instructor again displays sound methods. First, he knows how to do gracefully what many a teacher fails to do with consummate art: he can pretend a lack of knowledge. When Adam proposes his narrative, Raphael can reply graciously:

Say therefore on;  
 For I that day was absent . . . .<sup>26</sup>

Such an attitude is wholesome beside the arrogant assumption of superior knowledge which often represses the desire for self-expression. But, much more than this, the teacher seems actually curious to know what it is that he had missed because of his absence from the throne of heaven on a certain day. It is little wonder that Adam's narrative was part of a good education; the teacher knows how by this means to develop character.

All went well with Adam's narrative until he felt impelled to describe his adoration of Eve:

Yet when I approach  
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems

<sup>25</sup> *P. L.* 8, 191-197.

<sup>26</sup> *P. L.* 8, 228-229.

And in herself complete, so well to know  
Her own, that what she wills to do or say  
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best:  
All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
Degraded; Wisdom in discourse with her  
Loses discountenanced, and like Folly shows;  
Authority and Reason on her wait,  
As one intended first, . . . .<sup>27</sup>

Here the teacher must step in: it is no time for mildness,—the traditional mildness of Raphael,—as he deals with moral tendencies likely to prove fatal to Adam's happiness. The pupil is not actually sinful; but he is at the moment failing to allow the highest nature of man, Godlike Reason, to have supremacy. We have already seen that Raphael's instruction has been essentially a training of this reason to enable man to preserve his freedom. The poet points out that the fatal tendency just here is to deny to reason its rightful place; passion disturbs the right balance of the faculties. "All higher Knowledge," exclaims the rapturous lover, "in her presence falls degraded." "Authority and Reason on her wait," he declares in the next breath. Now Milton's angelic teacher would never have interrupted, had the rapture been a kind of hymn to heavenly beauty, to a spiritual loveliness typified by the physical charms of Eve. He had not interrupted that proper appreciation of Eve but a few moments before:

Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye,  
In every gesture dignity and love.<sup>28</sup>

This shows a right subordination of the physical to the spiritual, and of the mental powers which enable us to apprehend the physical world to those which have to do with supra-mundane realities. But in this other attitude there was a depreciation of reason, and an elevation of sense and feeling. Milton would say that there was, indeed, no fact of sin; but there was a tendency toward sin. When Adam is able to declare that Eve is in herself complete, he is in grave danger of forfeiting his freedom. Hence the severity of the rebuke:

Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part;  
Do thou but thine, and be not diffident

<sup>27</sup> *P. L.* 8. 546–555.

<sup>28</sup> *P. L.* 8. 488–9.



Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou  
Dismiss not her, when most thou need'st her nigh,  
By attributing overmuch to things  
Less excellent, . . . .<sup>29</sup>

The censure is comprehensive: it has regard for the worship of physical beauty, for the susceptibility to the emotions, and for the failure to recognize in the creation of God the goodness and omnipotence of the Maker. It is essentially a call to reason. Raphael has constantly in mind the securing for Adam of the greatest freedom. It is to be gained in part through the suppression of passion; but more through an elevation of the reason. Passion is here not regarded so much as an evil principle in itself as a source of evil when not properly subordinated. The attempt throughout is to develop the well-balanced mind—the right balance of faculties contemplated by the best of Greek ethics:

Take heed lest passion sway  
Thy judgment to do aught which else free will  
Would not admit. . . .  
. . . . . to stand or fall,  
Free in thine own arbitrement it lies.  
Perfect within, no outward aid require;  
And all temptation to transgress repel.<sup>30</sup>

Will, reason, passion: these are the three chief terms in Milton's psychology. The aim is to secure that relation of functions which will result in that highest act of the will, conformity to the Will of God.<sup>31</sup> That end the teacher can best attain, not by treating the passions as evil principles to be eradicated, but as elements to be properly subordinated to the reason. Hence the instruction by Raphael is from first to last a training of the rational powers.

Raphael's discourses have an ideal unity of purpose. The account of the fall, the story of the Creation, the discourse concerning astronomy, all have to do with the subordination

<sup>29</sup> *P. L.* 8. 561 ff.

<sup>30</sup> *P. L.* 8. 635-643.

<sup>31</sup> Vide supra, p. 130, quotation from *Second Defence*. See also Comenius, *Great Didactic*, ed. by Keatinge, London, 1910, p. 48: "In the movements of the soul the most important wheel is the will; while the weights are the desires and affections which incline the will this way or that. The escapement is the reason, etc."

of the will through a supremacy of the reason over the other powers. Thus man is prepared for a temptation to depreciate Godlike reason for the sake of a lower apparent good. Adam's narrative, in turn, tends on the whole to strengthen the reason as he recounts to his heavenly visitor the goodness of God. Only when in that account there came a depreciation of the rational did Raphael step in. One might reasonably expect that a pupil so disciplined would not become a slave to passion, but would remember that he was above all a rational creature, made in the image of his Maker.

But the teacher is hardly to be blamed because the pupil fell. There was, of course, a necessity for such a fall inherent in the traditional material. Moreover, experience has taught us not always to measure the excellence of the instruction by the conduct of the pupil whose mistakes constitute an obvious departure from that instruction. We hardly measure the success of Socrates by the conduct of Alcibiades. We could not justly call Raphael a bad teacher because his pupil succumbed to temptation. Far from this, the important fact is that in the light of the temptation recorded in the ninth book the methods of Raphael were in all respects sound.

He aimed, we have seen, to strengthen the reason. It is significant that in this discipline Milton allows Eve little share. She had been, at best, but a listener, and had departed before the more strenuous discipline of the rational powers had begun. Hence it is not uninteresting to notice that the temptation which assailed her was one made possible only through a faulty process of reasoning which resulted in a temporary—and fatal—separation from Adam.<sup>32</sup> To her logical fallacies her husband does not succumb, but, rather, to her appeals to emotion, and especially to a false sentiment that possibly he is not granting to her the freedom essential to all moral conduct—even though it be a freedom to arrive at wrong conclusions.<sup>33</sup> Thus, before the temptation he is strong in rational power, but is disposed to let his better reason be overcome by a species of sentimentality. As he permits her

<sup>32</sup> *P. L.* 9. 322 ff.

<sup>33</sup> *P. L.* 9. 372.

departure it is apparent that he has in mind the substance of the heavenly instruction:

O Woman, best are all things as the will  
Of God ordained them; his creating hand  
Nothing imperfect or deficient left  
Of all that he created, much less Man,  
Or aught that might his happy state secure,  
Secure from outward force: within himself  
The danger lies, yet lies within his power;  
Against his will he can receive no harm.  
But God left free the will; for what obeys  
Reason is free, and Reason he made right,  
But bid her well be ware, and still erect,  
Lest, by some fair appearing good surprised,  
She dictate false, and misinform the will  
To do what God expressly hath forbid.<sup>34</sup>

An Adam thus completely under the influence of Raphael's instruction could hardly have succumbed to the temptation. An Eve, as Milton would have us believe, less powerful of intellect, less able to detect specious reasoning, and to keep her rational processes free from the coloring of the emotions, and receiving instruction, as she desired, at second-hand, does succumb. By a fair appearing good her reason is surprised and dictates false. In other words, Eve is the victim of the artful tempter in just the respect in which Adam, with his comparatively well-disciplined reason, never could have been. Eve is the easy dupe of a skilful sophist, able to make the worse appear the better reason, able to cause her guilelessly to assume that the flattery which she mistook for a power of judgment argued the possession by the serpent of the power in eminent degree, able to cause her to assume that a lie (that he had partaken of the fruit) could constitute a basis for certain important deductions, able finally so completely to confuse her rational processes that she comes actually to believe that the interdiction of the fruit, the necessary condition of her freedom, as she well knows, constitutes a serious restriction of that freedom. Such sophistry practised upon Adam would have been of no avail. But Eve is a comparatively easy victim:

He ended, and his words, replete with guile,  
Into her heart too easy entrance won.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *P. L.* 9. 343-356.

<sup>35</sup> *P. L.* 9. 733-4.

Adam, in turn, is overcome, not by specious reasoning, but by that very susceptibility to passion of which his master had been aware in the discourse concerning the charms of Eve:

he scrupled not to eat,  
Against his better knowledge, not deceived,  
But fondly overcome with female charm.<sup>36</sup>

The temptation, far from proving the uselessness of Raphael's instruction, becomes a confirmation of its soundness. "Many there be," says Milton in *Areopagitica*,<sup>37</sup> "that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; . . . God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue?"

#### IV

And because this conquest of passion over reason introduced into man's life an evil principle, Milton must consider another kind of pupil, a second Adam, now in part transformed by his fall; and for his instruction henceforth he must introduce another kind of teacher who will constantly keep in mind this change in character. This new pupil, having sinned and come short of the glory of God, must needs repair his own ruin by regaining to know God aright, and to love, honor, and obey him.

We have already seen how Raphael, before the entrance of sin into the life of his pupil, sought to develop the right relation between reason and passion, and as means sought especially the strengthening of the reason. The passions were not essentially evil; it was only a failure to subordinate them to the Godlike power of reason which might introduce evil into the life of man. In contrast to this, Michael, the heavenly instructor of the last two books, has ever in mind this fact of sin, the victory of the carnal man over the spiritual, and a need of repairing the ruin thus brought about. Thus his task in

<sup>36</sup> *P. L.* 9. 997-9.

<sup>37</sup> *Prose Works*, *op. cit.* 2. 74.

part is the eradication of the evil principle which came to reside in the passions. For the execution of this task he can hardly have the temper of a Raphael. The latter is the mild, affable archangel; the former bears a two-edged sword both in word and deed.

If we say that the business of Raphael was to reveal the goodness of God and to stimulate a desire to know his ways and to delight to walk in them, we may also say that Michael's duty is to reveal to his pupil the evil created by his own unbridled will, which had failed to obey reason and submit to the loving Will of the Almighty. It is this aspect of human nature which Milton has in mind in another pertinent passage from *Areopagitica*:

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary. . . . Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; . . .

Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity, than by reading of all manner of tractates, and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.<sup>38</sup>

There follows the argument that if books are to be prohibited for fear of the infection which they may spread, then rightfully we must prohibit the Bible itself, "for that oftentimes relates blasphemy not nicely, it describes the carnal sense of wicked men not unelegantly, it brings in holiest men murmuring against Providence through all the arguments of Epicurus."<sup>39</sup> For these reasons in part, Milton continues, the Papists prohibit the Bible. But it is interesting that it is this very material in Holy Scripture which Milton makes the substance of the instruction recorded in the last two books of the epic. The eleventh book records a series of prophetic visions revealing the history of man from the time of Cain and Abel to that of Noah. These visions, each with its peculiar emotional effect, have as their final total effect the learning of true patience,

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.* 2. 68.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 69.

and the tempering of joy with fear and pious sorrow.<sup>40</sup> Thus the contemplation of future good and evil develops in Adam, now the representative of sinful man, the quality of equal-mindedness, equanimity, as he faces a universe in which evil has become an essential element.

For instance, the first episode has to do with the murder of Abel, a consequence upon the innocent of Adam's sin. Adam is in his heart dismayed. Unable to understand the cutting off of the pious man, he turns to his teacher:

O Teacher, some great mischief hath befallen  
To that meek man, who well had sacrificed:  
Is piety thus and pure devotion paid?<sup>41</sup>

Whereupon the heavenly instructor explains death as the natural consequence of sin—the sin of Adam. The pupil is more than dismayed. But the teacher, far from mild in his methods, does not hesitate to add a picture yet more dreadful: the vision of the diseased and the maimed. It immediately produces the requisite moral effect in adding compassion to dismay. But the compassion, a healthy moral state, does not long persist; man, prone now to sin, is easily led to question the ways of God to men:

Why is life given  
To be thus wrested from us? rather why  
Obtruded on us thus?<sup>42</sup>

It is a moral state which stands in need of immediate discipline:

"Their Maker's image," answered Michael, "then  
Forsook them, when themselves they vilified  
To serve ungoverned Appetite, . . . ." <sup>43</sup>

There follow precepts of temperance.

Then comes a picture delightful to the eye: wise men with a high material civilization,—caught, however, in the snares of fair women. But Adam, already himself the victim of such a snare, now lacks the judgment necessary to discern between real and apparent good. His heart "soon inclined to admit delight." Much better seems this vision.

<sup>40</sup> See *P. L.* 11. 358 ff.

<sup>41</sup> *P. L.* 11. 450–2.

<sup>42</sup> *P. L.* 11. 502–4.

<sup>43</sup> *P. L.* 11. 515–17.

To whom thus Michael: "Judge not what is best  
 By pleasure, though to Nature seeming meet,  
 Created, as thou art, to nobler end,  
 Holy and pure, conformity divine.  
 Those tents thou saw'st so pleasant were the tents  
 Of wickedness, wherein shall dwell his race  
 Who slew his brother."<sup>44</sup>

The teacher is never slow to attack the moral flaw the tendency toward which Raphael had so quickly detected in the ill-advised rapture on Eve. But now this impulse to think in terms of physical pleasure had become so pronounced that the new instructor of sinful man must needs attack the pernicious moral philosophy which seeks to justify it: Michael attacks that Epicureanism which Milton himself so heartily condemned. Such ethical teaching grows out of sin, out of the victory of the passions over reason. Milton's fallen Adam is an Epicurean in dire need of discipline of no soft kind. Hence Michael deliberately reveals as the next vision a scene of universal war and discord.<sup>45</sup> It brings Adam to tears,—tears after his great delight in the scenes of apparent bliss. Turning to his teacher for explanation, he is shown that the moral laxity characteristic of the previous scene—a laxity which the undiscerning Adam, thinking in the false terms of pleasure, had quite overlooked—was the source of the discord. The teacher is obliged to point out causal relations which the pupil as yet in his weak, sinful state is unable to discern for himself. To point to such relations once is to induce in the pupil the habit of seeing them for himself. A pupil trained to think in terms of cause and effect rather than in the specious terms of pleasure and pain is for Milton as for Socrates—and for our modern scientist—a better moral being. His knowledge, his powers of observation, generalization, and deduction, become, indeed, a kind of morality.

Such is but a cursory glance at a kind of instruction of profound ethical import: first, a vivid presentation of evil; then a careful observation of the effect upon the emotions; and then the correction, with the attempt always to make the

<sup>44</sup> *P. L.* 11. 603–9.

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to notice the similarity in moral effect of this vision and that of modern science of a state of nature characterized by a fierce struggle for existence in which only the most fit survive.

pupil look upon the facts of life dispassionately. Only the truly social impulses are left without discipline. The desire for self-gratification is met as it was met in Milton's own day by many a stern Calvinist.

The method of the twelfth book is not essentially different. As mortal sight fails, the teacher resorts to direct narrative. Thereupon follow the stories of Nimrod, of the building of Babel, of the life of Abraham, of Moses, and finally of Christ. It would be interesting in a detailed study to trace in the narratives relating especially to the last three agents how there is again developed the theme of perfect liberty through obedience, how the narrative of the heroic has an essential place in Michael's instruction. The moral of the teaching of this last book, concerned for the most part with perfect patterns of right living, is that through obedience, conformity to the Will of God, man achieves salvation, repairs the ruin accomplished by his own wilful disobedience.

## V

This instruction is complementary to that of Raphael: the one strengthened the reason; the other furnished the proper materials for a contemplation of virtue and vice. The one thinks of education as primarily a development of capacity, of Godlike reason; the other, unable to regard man as longer self-sufficient, puts the greater emphasis upon the matter of instruction, vice in contrast with virtue. He thus comes to rely upon a training of the emotions as well as of the reason. He attacks the assumption that the pleasurable is good, not by way of subtle reasoning, but by the presentation of facts, the facts of sin and its consequences. He relies in part upon the emotional effect.

This order in the processes of education is similar to that described in the letter to Hartlib. Here Milton, after insisting upon the development of reason or the power of judgment, proceeds:

"Then will be required a special reinforcement of constant and sound indoctrinating, to set them right and firm, instructing them more amply in the knowledge of virtue and the hatred of vice."<sup>46</sup> Raphael was concerned with the power of

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.* 3. 472.



reason or "*proairesis*"; Michael with setting the pupil right and firm by instruction in the knowledge of virtue and the hatred of vice. Thus the methods of the two heavenly instructors may be for Milton representative in a comprehensive way of all good method. Taken together they have regard for both the goodness and the evil of man's nature, his power of reason and his capacity for emotional experiences, both vitally concerned with the direction of the will. Not only do they appeal to reason, feeling, imagination, and the senses, but they accomplish their purposes through the subject matter both of the arts and the sciences. Here is the view of a poet, both Puritan and humanist, which has regard for the whole nature of man.

It seems an ideal supplement to the earlier view. We may recall that Milton had proposed in his letter to Hartlib, not the whole art of education, but the reforming of education, the "voluntary idea . . . of a better education, in extent and comprehension far more large, and yet of time far shorter, and of attainment far more certain, than hath been yet in practice."<sup>47</sup> His purpose is obviously too controversial to result in a great theory as philosophic and constructive as we might expect after the poet's most mature reflection. The accomplishment of certain very practical reforms keeps him from the statement of views possessing the universality of the highest theory. He has much to say concerning the reform of the curriculum; his work is full of specific suggestions; but it has little to say about the ethical bases of educational policy, and even less concerning method, and practically nothing about the relation of education to that basic theme of liberty through perfect obedience to the Will of God.

It is at this point that the artistic utterances of *Paradise Lost*—if we may now think of the expression of educational ideals as in keeping with the purposes of the scholar-poet—supply those philosophic elements which the reader seeks in vain in the prose treatise. Man's freedom through his obedience to law: it is the theme alike of the discourses of Raphael and of Michael. Education is thus brought into proper relation to theology, ethics, and politics. The suggestions are now no longer those of a man zealous to reform prevailing methods; but they aim, rather, to begin with those fundamental notions

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.* 3. 463.

of the constitution of human nature, and a right conception of the end of man. A view which thus regards Adam as the universal pupil is in the highest sense universal. It is the artistic expression of Milton's most mature contemplation of a theme which he had regarded, at least since 1654, as essentially to be seen in proper relation to that more basic theme of human liberty.

This mature view, we have said, makes the aim of education the achievement of true liberty. All of the instruction, both of Raphael and Michael, has an eye to the fact that this liberty comes only through willing obedience. To this end man was taught that God was omnipotent,—that Lucifer could not prevail against Him. He was made to see the consequence of a failure to acknowledge that supremacy. Then there was impressed upon Adam the great fact of the freedom of the will, the gift to man of Godlike reason, enabling the individual to understand the ways of God as always right and good, to guide the will, strengthen the affections, and curb the passions. Finally, through Michael's instruction there was further emphasis upon the omnipotence of God,—of a God who, far from being the author of evil, makes man responsible for sin. With the comprehension of this fact there comes also the recognition of the necessary pain in facing the consequences, and also the conception of a goal, a hope of salvation in Christ.

If we are willing to regard this as the expression of the poet's maturest thought concerning education, we may examine a view which not only takes into account the good and evil in man's nature, but also regards education as a process of developing the proper delight in rational thought (such a delight as attended the discourse of Raphael), and a willingness to endure pain in the correction of the lower passionate nature (such pain as Adam endured at the hand of Michael). The subject matter is comprehensive, with its record of the fall of the angels, partaking of the nature of drama, the narrative of the Creation, the scientific account of "celestial motions," the historical material of Old Testament narrative, and the theology of the Atonement. And, finally, the epic contains an important presentation of right method, wherein the functions of the teacher and the pupil are seen in complementary relation, the instructor at times imparting information to satisfy

curiosity, at times listening to the observations of the pupil. Sometimes the instructor encourages, sometimes cautions, but more often is at pains to indicate the relation between facts already observed, thus making the facts significant. Thus, for instance, it is Michael who points out the relation between the marriage of the strong men to the beautiful women, and the universal discord of the succeeding vision.

The two discourses also have an underlying unity of purpose. Both aim to develop virtue, to strengthen the will, elevate the reason, and to keep all the faculties in their proper relation. Neither teacher aims to repress feeling; rather, both aim to develop right feeling—feeling in right relation to reason—that the whole man may grow in the image of his Maker. It is the conception of no narrow Puritan; it is the view of one rightly called the last of the great Elizabethan humanists.

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